Top-Tier American University Completely Eliminates Manual Approvals in Application Access Requests

"Intelligence plus character- that is the goal of true education", quotes Martin Luther King Jr. Working on these principles, Alcor worked with a top-tier American University to add the much needed element of automation to the University's manual processes that were both resource and time consuming.

The Princeton Review for ten consecutive years recognizes this University as, "The Best in The West". The University offers nearly 200 undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs to over 16000 students.

These students, and 275 faculty members, periodically need access to specific applications, services, and other catalog items.

Role-based access and rights were being provided after a time-consuming and resource-intensive manual approval process.

The monumental task "at hand"

The sheer number of students spread across such a large variety of courses presented a formidable challenge to the University when it came to providing them access to applications and other resources. Since role-based and needs-based access was being provided

manually, it was proving very hard to deal with the complexity as well as the large volume of the service requests.

There were as many as 25 separate catalog items to which access could be sought by students. Different levels of access like user, developer, and administrator had to be provided, further increasing the complexity. In all, over a 100 manual approval tasks were involved in servicing the access requests. Some access items required multiple approvals -as many as 10 in some cases. Some processes, for instance, on-boarding a new student, called for pulling in a bundle of requests, each with its own prescribed treatment and needing manual routing of the "bundle" from stage to stage.

The quarter system being followed by the University meant even more access requests as the situation for many students changed every four months.

The manual approval process was slowing down the grant of application access to the students. This was especially challenging since the University operated on a quarter-system (slated to transition to the semester system in fall 2018).

Alcor Solutions Inc

Geographies
United States , Canada, Latin America, India

Highlights
Alcor's partnership with ServiceNow® is based on a strong belief of the capabilities of this amazing platform and the enormous value it unlocks for our customers.

- ▸ ServiceNow® Gold Services Partner
- ▸ 200+ Clients, 400+ implementations
- ▸ CSAT scores of 9.6
- ▸ Certified ServiceNow® Techno-functional and Technical consultants

Business
Global cloud advisory and implementation services company serving clients in multiple geographies including North America, Europe, Japan and India. Clients include global Fortune 500 companies, Government agencies and leading organizations in multiple industry verticals

Given the short duration of each term the students needed access immediately, and in some cases, those needs also changed from quarter to quarter.

The manual process was also extremely effort-intensive and error-prone. The University was also concerned about the potential for access being granted to resources inappropriately given the various manual approvals involved. As an institution with a publically stated commitment to organizational effectiveness and better resource utilization, none of this was acceptable to them.

Automation to the rescue

It seemed abundantly clear to the University that the manual processes would have to be transformed for greater speed and efficiency. The University decided to automate user provisioning for application access processes. The aim was to reduce and ultimately eliminate the need for manual approvals and optimize delivery of these fulfillment services.

The "Manual" to "Automated" journey – with ServiceNow®

The University had already been using ServiceNow® for IT Service management. *Alcor leveraged ServiceNow®'s power to build a unique automated "Request Factory" that could automate the access request process too.*

The application access processes were examined in detail and then broken up into reusable workflow components. Automated workflows were envisaged that would be dynamically put together based on the data at hand. The reusable components would be brought together to create these automated process flows based on the specifics of the type of request and who it was meant for. This "data-driven dynamic workflows" approach helped address even the most complex access request processes quickly and easily.

With the automation in place, the application requests now follow an automated request model specifically designed to address the complexity of the approval process as well as to allow for the automation of the fulfilment on approval. This automated approach to request model has helped to dramatically reduce the number of individual workflows, improved scalability, and made roll-outs very fast.

Put simply – the automated process has meant fewer individual workflows. This, in turn, has meant faster approvals, greater scalability, and easier fulfilment.

Putting it together

Transforming the application access process called for a clear understanding of the application access workflows, the special needs of each of the stakeholders, the mandated rules and regulations, as well as the chosen technology platform.

A University representative quotes,
"After implementing the automated solution both the approval for, and the provisioning of, the application access for the users has become faster, simpler, and subject to fewer errors. Automation, driven by ServiceNow® and Alcor, has helped the University win the day!"

This is where Alcor leveraged its vast experience in the higher education space, in ServiceNow®, and especially in organizational transformation initiatives.

Alcor conducted comprehensive process workshops at the University to review and understand the workflows and break them down into constituent elements. Then they defined how those elements could be addressed within ServiceNow® for service delivery. Putting it all together, they designed and recommended a comprehensive process for "Automated Dynamic Approvals" that covered all the catalog items. The automated solution, as approved by the University , was developed and deployed over a four-week period.

Payback time!

It's been a few months since the access requests have been automated and it's fair to say the results are already visible.

▸ The number of individual catalog items has been brought down from 25 to 15 – a reduction of 40%

▸ Over 100 individual manual approval tasks have been completely eliminated – today all approvals are automated.

▸ The average time taken to submit an access request is not more than 2-3 minutes now. The average time taken for providing application access is reduced by 80%.

▸ The time taken for onboarding new students has also been substantially brought down by 70%
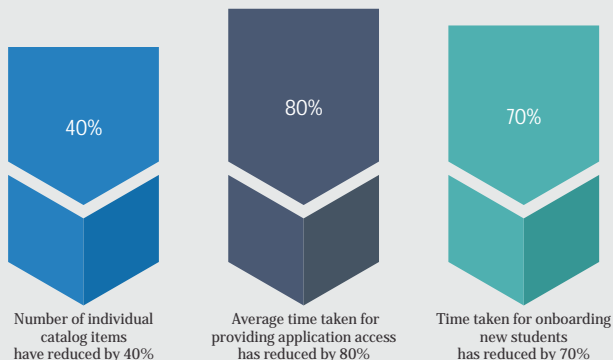
The numbers tell a tale

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Key Takeaways

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Key Takeaways of the ServiceNow® Implementation

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